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Career Management Team Findings for Wildlife & Fisheries Biologists



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- Staffing for the BLM Wildlife and Fisheries Program

Career Management Team Findings for Wildlife & Fisheries Biologists

**October 1987
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Preface

Team Goal Statement

Management of fish and wildlife resources on public lands is achieved by wildlife personnel. Thus, effective land management requires effective personnel management. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) must not only plan and initiate activities to manage fish and wildlife resources, but also assist employees in managing their careers and realizing their potentials.

The BLM must meet future challenges of managing the Nation's fish and wildlife resources on public lands by:

1. Maintaining appropriate skills, staffing, and experience to meet legal and environmental needs and mandates.
2. Providing and maintaining a dual career ladder to retain highly qualified employees, thus ensuring accomplishment of the Bureau mission.
3. Maintaining and enhancing professional and technical expertise.

4. Encouraging and preparing highly qualified people to seek entry level line and staff management positions.
5. Ensuring that each employee has meaningful and challenging work and is in a work environment that promotes productivity and job satisfaction.
6. Improving employee morale by recognizing excellence.

Team Members

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Introduction

The Career Management Team (CMT) for Wildlife and Fisheries Biologists was established in May 1986 by the Assistant Director for Lands and Renewable Resources (Appendix 1). The action was taken following the attendance of the new Chief, Division of Wildlife and Fisheries, at the Bureauwide Wildlife Program Meeting held in Denver, Colorado, in January 1986, and his corresponding tour of Field Offices (FOs) from February through April 1986.

The tasks assigned the CMT were to prepare specific recommendations for 1) career development, 2) career enhancement, and 3) enriching job experiences of Bureau Wildlife and Fisheries Biologists and Botanists.

The initial meeting of the CMT at BLM's Denver Service Center (DSC) in June 1986 resulted in a consensus that the Bureau's Wildlife and Fisheries Biologists should be questioned to ascertain their opinions and career desires prior to the Team formulating career management recommendations. Based on this, three questionnaires were developed:

1. Bureauwide Questionnaire (Appendix 2).
2. Questionnaire to Former BLM Biologists in Other Positions Within BLM (Appendix 3).
3. Questionnaire to Former BLM Biologists No Longer With Agency (Appendix 4).

The Bureauwide questionnaire was pretested by using a cross section of 10 employees at DSC in August 1986. Based on the results of the pretest, the questionnaire was modified.

On August 15, 1986, the Bureauwide questionnaire was distributed to Wildlife and Fisheries Biologists through State Office (SO) Wildlife Program Leaders and to a control group of approximately 150 other professionals throughout the agency. Of the 400 questionnaires mailed, 257 were returned, for a rate of over 64 percent (Table 1).

Table 1. Diversity of response.

Professions	Responses	% ¹
Wildlife Biologists	150	58
Fisheries/Wildlife and Fishery Biologists	19	7
Biological Technicians/Statisticians/Botanists	6	2
Management (DSDs, ADMs, etc.)	6	2
NRS/Envir. Specialists/Envir. Scientists	16	6
Range Conservationists	27	11
Foresters	11	4
Geologists/Hydrologists/PETs/Mining Engineers	13	5
Recreation Planners/Archaeologists/ Reality Specialists/Wilderness Specialists	9	4
	257	99

¹ Due to rounding error, total does not equal 100 percent.

At the same time, similar questionnaires with basically the same information were developed for former Bureau Wildlife and Fisheries Biologists who had changed professions within the agency and for former Biologists who had left the agency. Based on the pretest of the Bureauwide questionnaire, and through personal knowledge of the CMT and of SO and District Office (DO) Biologists, a mailing list was developed for questionnaires 2 and 3. Direct mailings were made to these individuals August 19, 1986.

Of the 70 questionnaires sent to former BLM Biologists in other positions, 52 were returned, for a rate of over 74 percent. Fifty-four of the 95 questionnaires sent to former BLM biologists no longer with the agency were returned, for a rate of about 57 percent. Sixty to 70 percent of the questionnaires returned included comments.

The results from all three questionnaires have been temporarily incorporated into the wildlife information system and are identified as the wildlife career management databases. These three databases can be accessed on the Honeywell DPS-8. Once the appropriate Aspen/2 prompt "Enter Next Command" appears, each respective database can be queried by entering:

QDB:WILD/LIFE/CAREER1 (for the control groups and all Wildlife Program personnel)

QDB:WILD/LIFE/CAREER2 (for former Wildlife Program personnel still with the Bureau but currently in other positions)

QDB:WILD/LIFE/CAREER3 (for former Wildlife Program personnel no longer with the Bureau)

Analysis

The first section of the three questionnaires was designed to collect biographical information that would be useful in evaluating the responses. While the Team realizes that the sample size is small for general Bureauwide application, it is felt that a 70 percent sample of the agency's Wildlife and Fisheries Biologists is entirely adequate for the development of general assumptions concerning the Bureau's average professional in the Wildlife and Fisheries Program. It should also be pointed out that while the sample size of non-Wildlife Program professionals was small, there was no significant deviation in the response of this control group from the Biologists'. Because of this, the results of the Bureauwide questionnaire can be said to equate with the average Bureau professional. A comparison of the average Bureau Wildlife Program professional's biographical data with the other groups surveyed is displayed on Table 2.

This biographical data seems to validate the widely held opinion that the Bureau is aging, which also indicates that the Bureau's professional staff is composed of experienced individuals. The data also shows that those employees leaving the Bureau are taking many years of professional experience with them. Wildlifers in the Bureau, whether by choice or not, are staying in place longer. Of the Biologists leaving the agency, 81 percent are still employed as Biologists with the agencies shown in Figure 1. Only 12 percent changed professions after leaving the BLM.

Figure 1. Employers of former BLM Biologists who left the agency.

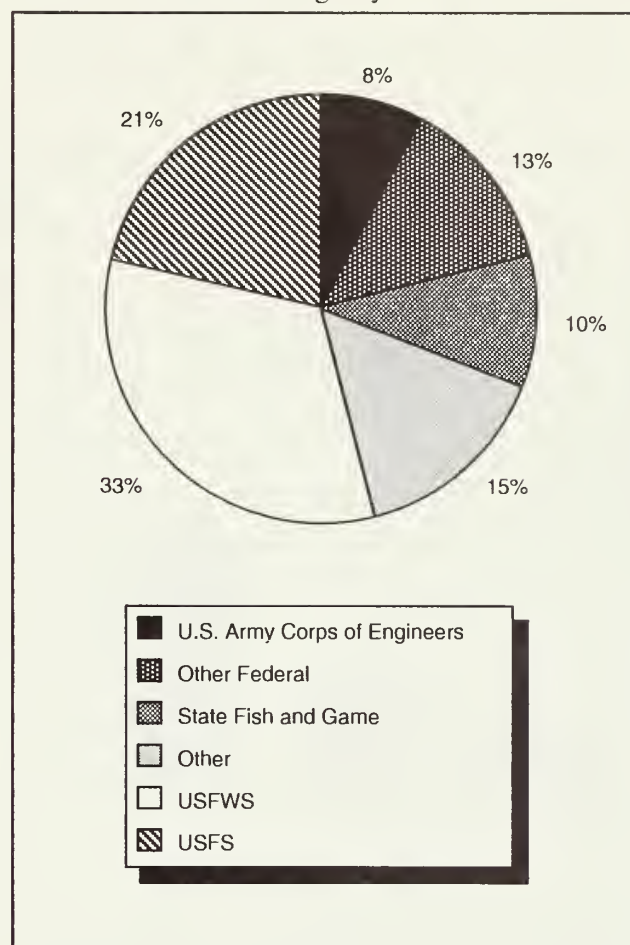


Table 2. Comparison of average biographical data of the three groups surveyed.

Biographical Element	Current Professionals	Former Wildlifers In Other BLM Jobs	Biologists Who Left BLM
Works(ed) in a District or RA Office (%)	85.0	79.0	77.0
Years in Place	6.2	4.6	4.8
Years Worked for the Agency	10.1	12.5	7.0
Years of Federal Service	13.0	14.2	12.2
Average GS Grade	10.6	10.9	10.1
Years Since Leaving Last BLM Job	N/A	4.9	3.9
Sample Size	257	52	54

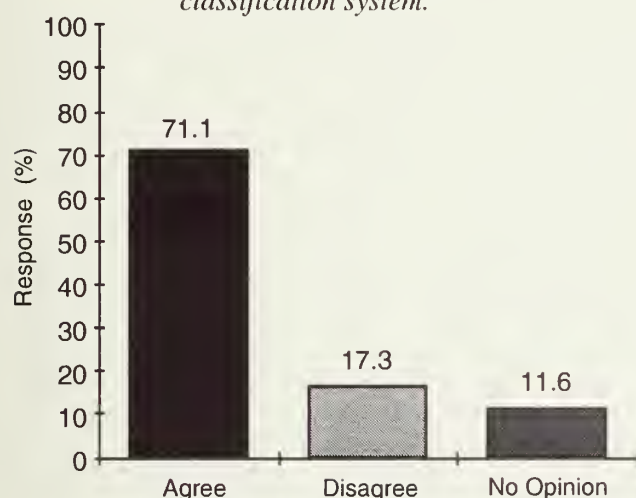
Results of Bureauwide Questionnaire 1

For ease of data analysis and interpretation of the questionnaires, written comments and evaluations were grouped into like categories. The following dis-

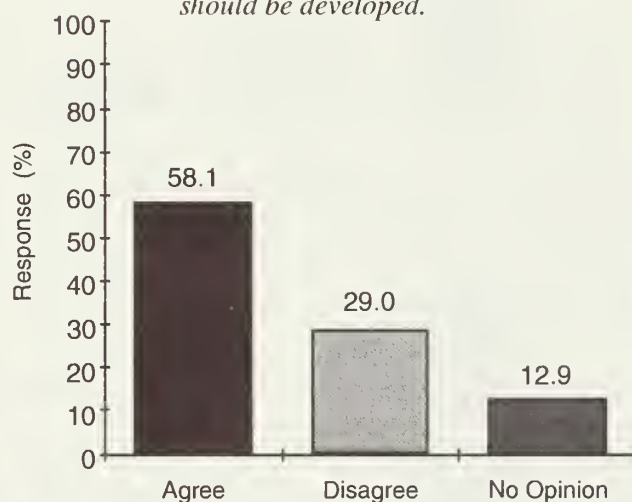
cussions and results may be referenced to the attached questionnaires (Appendix 2).

Category I. Position Classification — Questions 2, 3, and 4

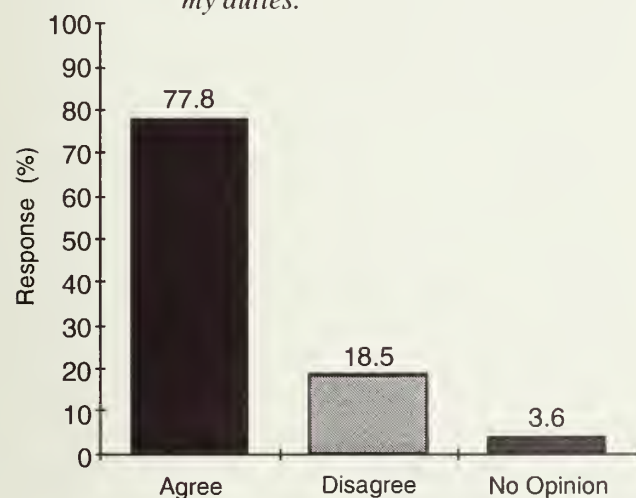
Question 2. - *I understand the Bureau's job classification system.*



Question 4. - *Standardized P.D. criteria should be developed.*



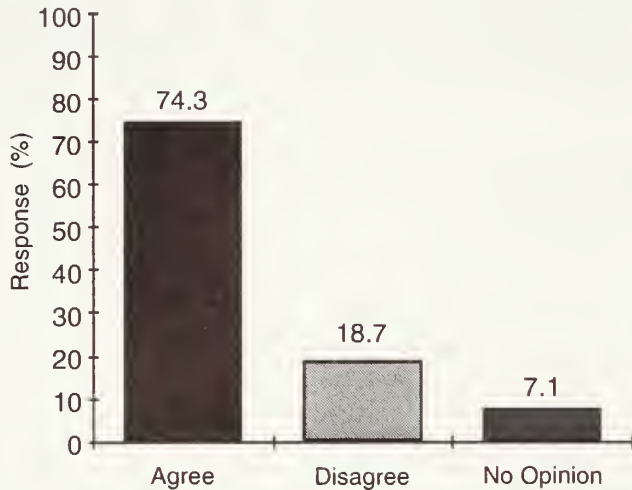
Question 3. - *My P.D. accurately described my duties.*



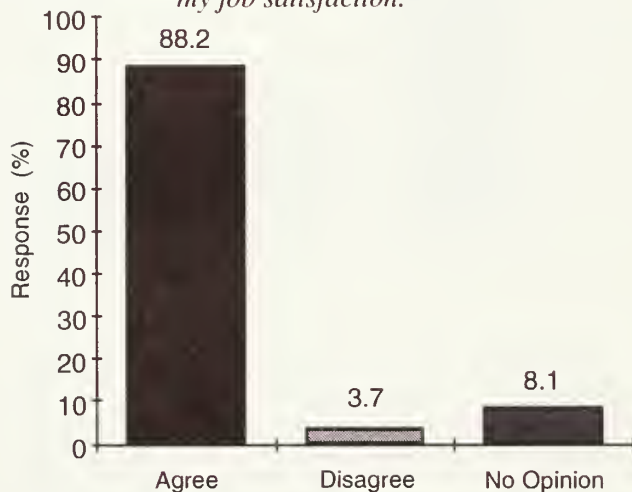
These questions deal with the Bureau's job classification and position description process. Overall, the employees "understand the job classification system" (71.1 percent positive response), think that their position descriptions are accurate (77.8 percent positive response), and think that some position description criteria should be standardized (58.1 percent positive response). Analysis of the written comments indicated some concern that the current practice of using Range Conservationist GS-0454 and Forestry GS-0460 position classification standards to classify Wildlife Biologist GS-0486 positions may have resulted in lower than justified Biologist grade levels.

Category II. Job/Career Satisfaction — Questions 5, 6, 7, and 8

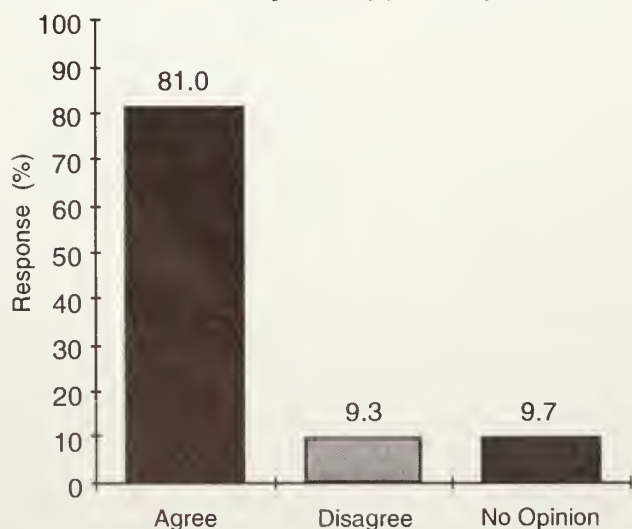
Question 5. - *I am satisfied with my present job.*



Question 6. - *Bureau management can enhance my job satisfaction.*



Question 7. - *I can improve my job satisfaction.*



This series of questions deals with job satisfaction, perhaps the most important component of employee morale and productivity. An impressive 74.3 percent of the employees surveyed indicated satisfaction with their present job. Written comments indicated a very strong personal and professional commitment to the management of fish and wildlife resources. In many cases, Biologists felt that they were in an adversarial role within the agency; however, the personal satisfaction gained from significant fish and wildlife resource accomplishments outweigh the adversity experienced. Biologists felt they needed to be conscientious stewards of fish and wildlife habitats through an upbeat, well balanced, aggressive program. Another factor contributing to job satisfaction was that Biologists felt that their present job provided opportunities for diversity, and at the same time, allowed specialization.

Approximately 18.7 percent of the employees responding indicated a low degree of job satisfaction. The most often cited reason or explanation was a perceived lack of management support for the Wildlife Program in general. Employees felt that the DO and Resource Area (RA) Wildlife Programs were not considered on an equal basis with other Bureau programs and were often viewed as a support program or as an obstruction to commodity oriented programs. Lack of job satisfaction was also attributed to job burnout due to lack of diversity or change. An overwhelming majority of respondents (88.2 percent) felt that Bureau management could enhance their job satisfaction.

Comparing this result with the previous 74.3 percent positive response to job satisfaction indicates that job satisfaction can be further improved. The most often indicated method of improving job satisfaction was increased management support. The most often identified factor of desired management support was recognition by management of the Wildlife Program as an equal with other multiple-use programs. Other factors identified included improved feedback on resource decisions; stability and consistency in establishing priorities, goals, and objectives; and implementation of clear, meaningful, and enforceable resource policies and regulations. A number of individuals addressed a need for more opportunities for career growth within their existing positions, such as details, temporary national or regional assignments, and promotions/advancement within an identifiable career

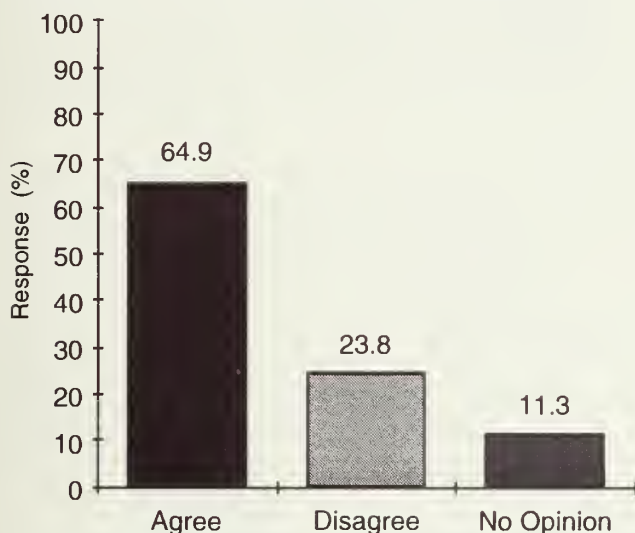
ladder. As expected, 81.0 percent of the employees responding indicated that they could improve their job satisfaction.

A number felt that they needed to do better career planning, create their own career enhancement opportunities, seek outside assignments, and in general, be more motivated. Improved time management, looking at new ways to do a job, continuing education, participation in professional societies, and publishing professional papers were also cited as ways to improve personal job satisfaction (Question 8).

When asked to rank the most important ways in which the Bureau could improve job satisfaction, over 50 percent of the responses included providing support for attendance at professional meetings, training, and special projects. Comments addressing these questions recommended that emphasis be placed on interagency assignments, foreign assignments (Exchange Program), and special term assignments. The importance of job satisfaction can be further stressed by examining the responses to why employees left the agency or why they changed professions (page 13).

Category III. Career Goals — Questions 9, 10, 11, and 12

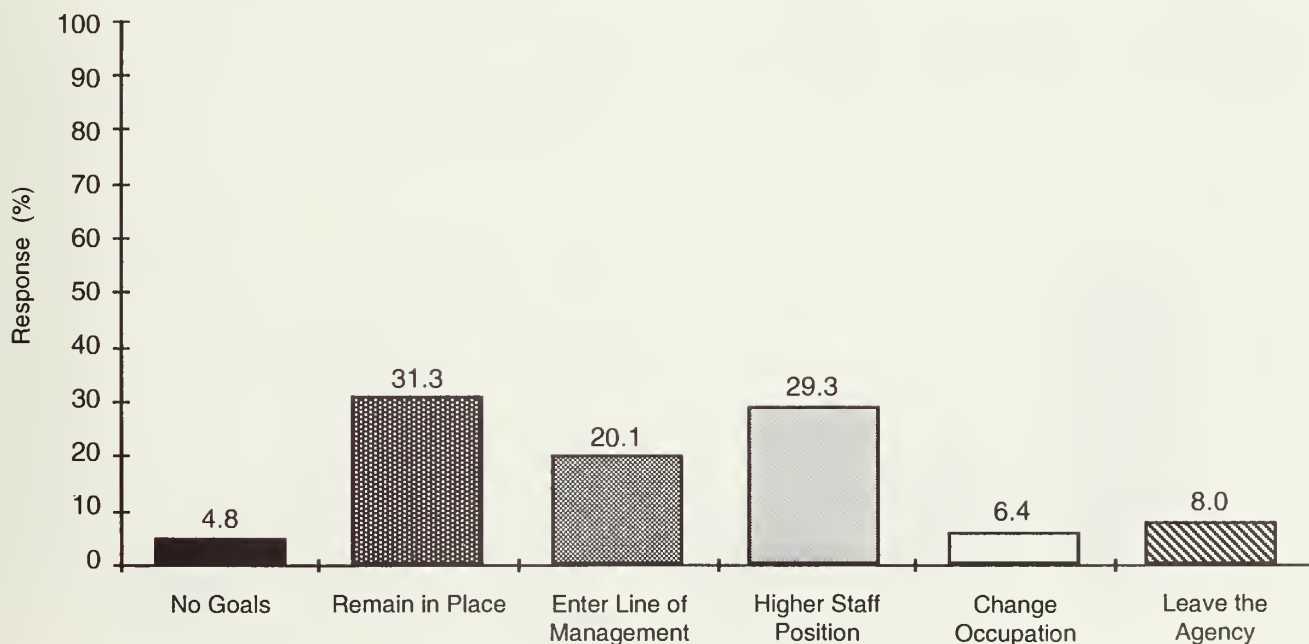
Question 9a. - *I have well defined career goals.*



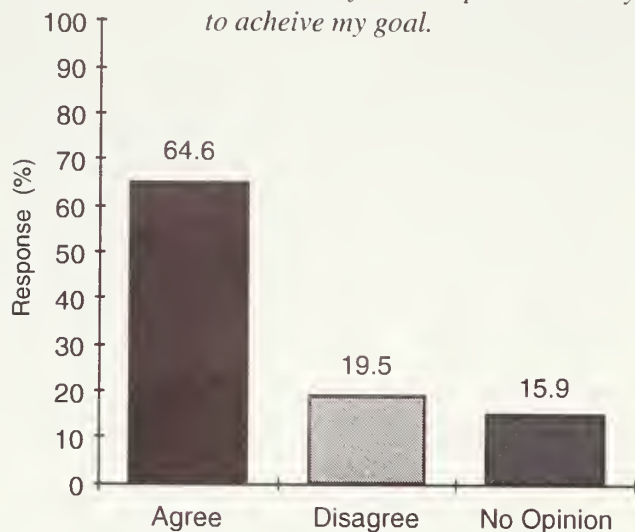
This series of questions attempts to identify employees' attitudes and perceptions toward career planning and confidence in career futures within the organization. An interesting anomaly was displayed by the respondents to the first two questions. While 35.1 percent of the respondents felt that they had no career goals or no opinion concerning career goals (Question 9a), when provided with a listing of common career choices, only 4.8 percent continued to profess to having no career goals (Question 9b).

A consistent percentage of respondents said that they had well-defined career goals (64.9 percent), were aware of a path to achieving their goals (64.6 percent), and felt that they had a future within the agency (64.9 percent). Another interesting result is that only 8.0 percent of the respondents intend to leave the agency.

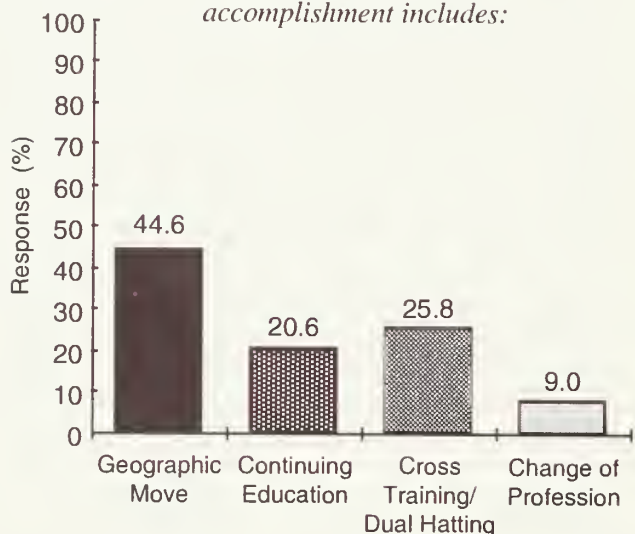
Question 9b. - *These career goals include:*



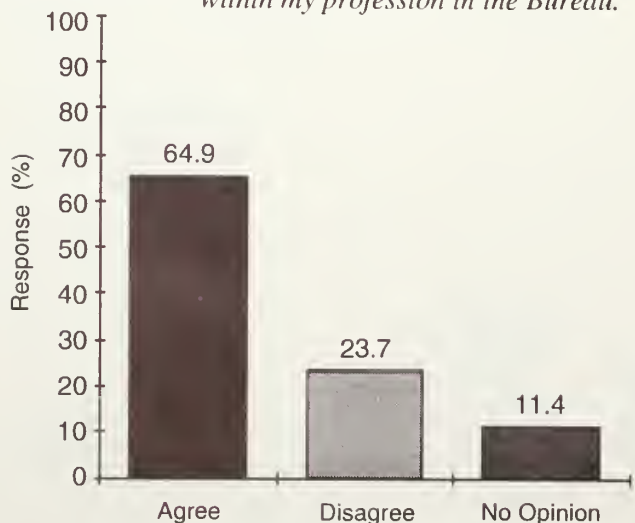
Question 10. - *I am aware of a career path necessary to achieve my goal.*



Question 11. - *This schedule for goal accomplishment includes:*



Question 12. - *I feel that there is a future for me within my profession in the Bureau.*



All things taken into consideration, a turnover rate less than 10 percent would seem commendable to a Government agency. Further analysis indicates that the same percentage of Biologists as other professionals wish to remain in location, attain a higher graded staff position, or enter line management.

Employees' perceptions concerning geographic relocation in relation to career goal accomplishment seem to be unclear; 44.6 percent ranked geographic moves as important to goal accomplishment. However, written comments indicated that many of these same respondents are not willing to move. Additionally, many respondents indicated awareness of paths necessary to achieving their goal, but questioned their ability to advance in the current climate of tight budgets. While a high percentage see a future for themselves within the agency, the tone of the written comments questioned whether it would be a good future. Several conclusions can be drawn concerning the responses to this issue.

1. A significant portion (31.3 percent) of the Bureau's professionals regard geographic location as being more important than career advancement.
2. A greater proportion of professional employees desire to advance within their profession (29.3 percent), rather than entering line management (20.1 percent).
3. The Bureau has an excellent pool of experienced professionals as potential candidates for line management positions (20.1 percent).

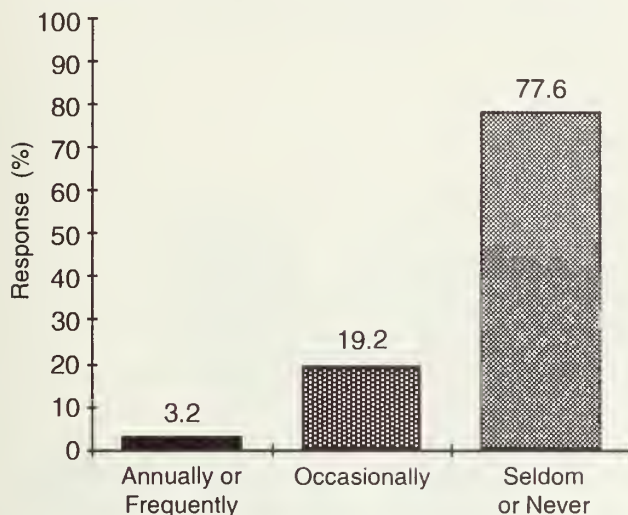
Correspondingly, 27 percent of the former BLM Biologists who remained in the agency entered management positions.

Table 3. Former BLM Biologists in management positions.

	Responses	%
Management	12	27
Staff	33	73
Total	45	100

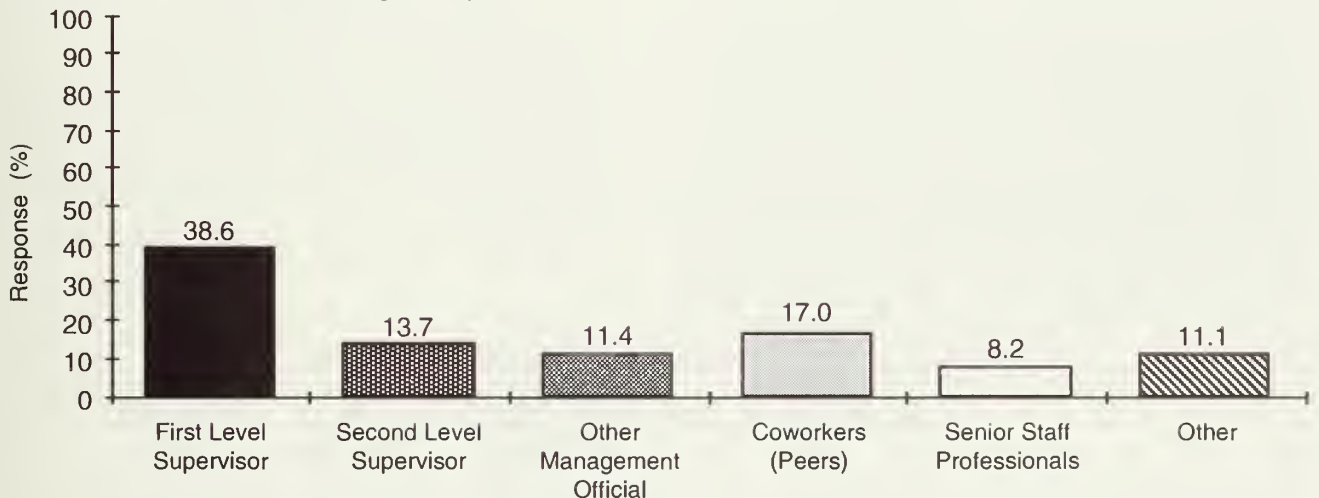
Category IV. Career Counseling/Planning — Questions 13 and 14

Question 13a. - *I have received career counseling.*

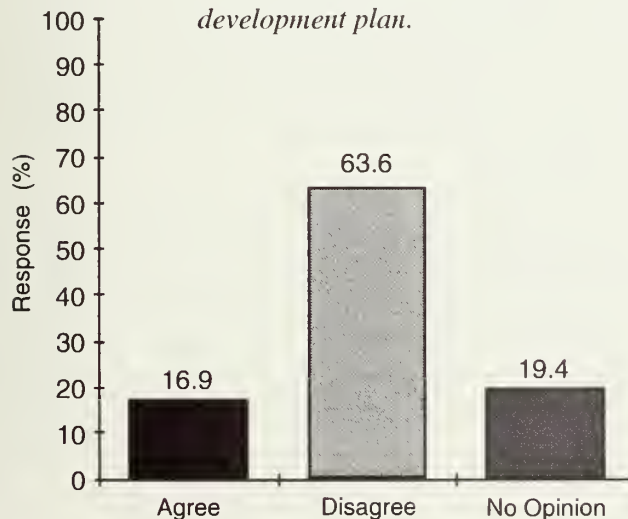


A review of the responses to these questions reveals that 77.6 percent of the Bureau's employees have either seldom or never received career counseling, while 63.6 percent of those responding questioned what an Individual Development Plan (IDP) was or professed to never having heard of an IDP. By comparing the responses of this series with the previous series of responses, it becomes clear that while there is no formal system of career counseling within the agency, the employees themselves have developed their own career plans (64.9 percent).

Question 13b. - *This counseling was by:*

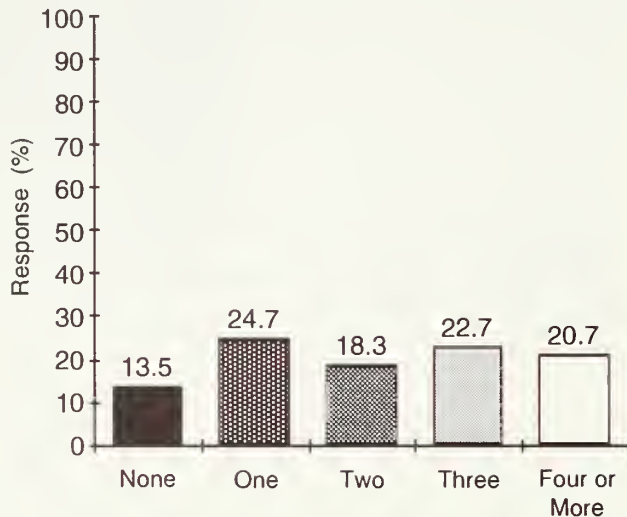


Question 14. - *I have an effective individual development plan.*



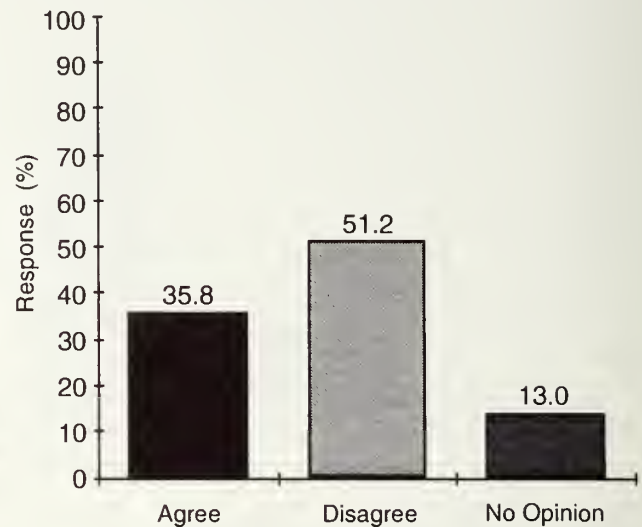
Category V. Career Competitiveness — Questions 15, 16, 17, and 18

Question 15. - *How many geographic moves have you made?*



As an attempt to ascertain how competitive or how well the respondents perceive their chances for career advancement, these questions fail to provide conclusive results. A review of how many job applications an employee has submitted reveals that 45 percent of the respondents have applied for other jobs within the past 2 years (Question 16). With the average tenure being

Question 17. - *I understand merit promotion and the PMC processes.*

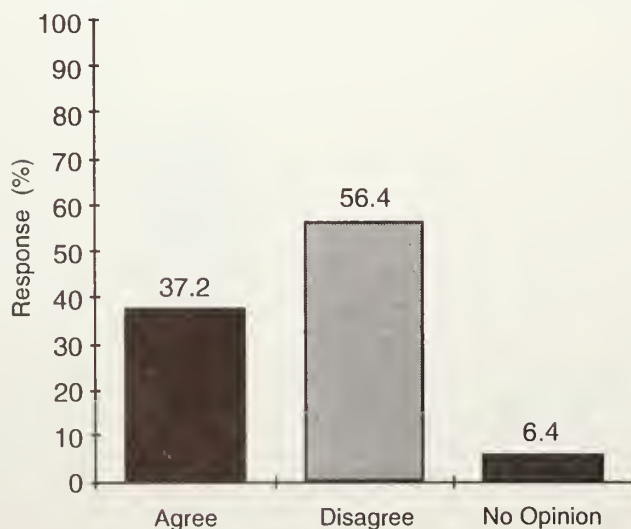


over 6 years, this is not an unusual number.

Around 51.2 percent of the employees do not understand the agency's promotion and reassignment process. This is surprising due to the fact that the average length of service with the agency is in excess of 10 years.

Category VI. General Information — Questions 19, 20, 21, and 22

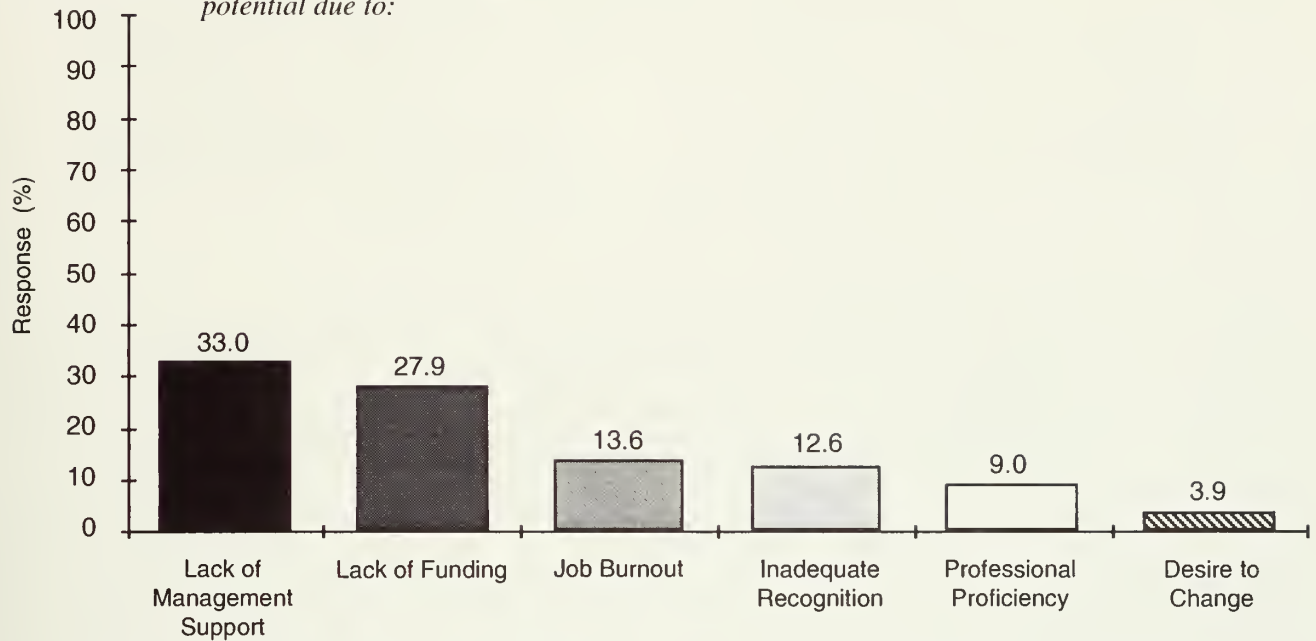
Question 19. - *I am working at my full potential.*



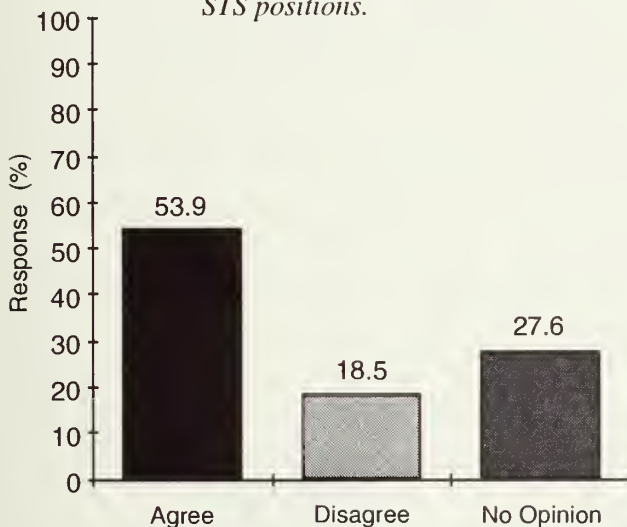
The last series of questions within the questionnaire is general and reinforces previous responses. As an example, a majority (56.4 percent) of the respondents did not think they were working at their full potential (Question 19), due to lack of management support, lack of staffing and funding, and job burnout (Question 20).

As expected, the last question (Question 22), dealing with Senior Technical Specialist (STS) positions, generated the most written comments. While a majority (53.9 percent) of the respondents thought that STS positions were desirable, the tone of the accompanying written comments were of the "yes, but" nature. Most of these comments are supportive of the STS concept, but questioned whether the agency could afford these positions at this time.

Question 20. - *I am not working at my full potential due to:*



Question 22. - *I feel the Bureau should establish STS positions.*



About 27.6 percent of the respondents held no opinion concerning STS positions. This is surprising because of the fact that this was a poll of professional employees who might be the ones holding STS positions. While the number of employees disagreeing with the STS concept was not large (18.5 percent), this group seemed to be disproportionately vocal. The major reason cited for disagreement with this concept was that there was no need for another layer within the organization. Also cited was the belief that STS positions already exist at DSC and Washington Office (WO) levels.

Results of Questionnaire 2 — Former Biologists In Other BLM Jobs and Questionnaire 3 — BLM Biologists Who Left the Agency

For ease of analysis, the results from the two questionnaires sent to former Biologists are presented together. Detailed responses from each questionnaire can be found in Appendices 3 and 4.

Although ranked differently, it is interesting to note that both the “other jobs with BLM” and “left agency” groups gave the same five top reasons for leaving their last BLM Biologist position.

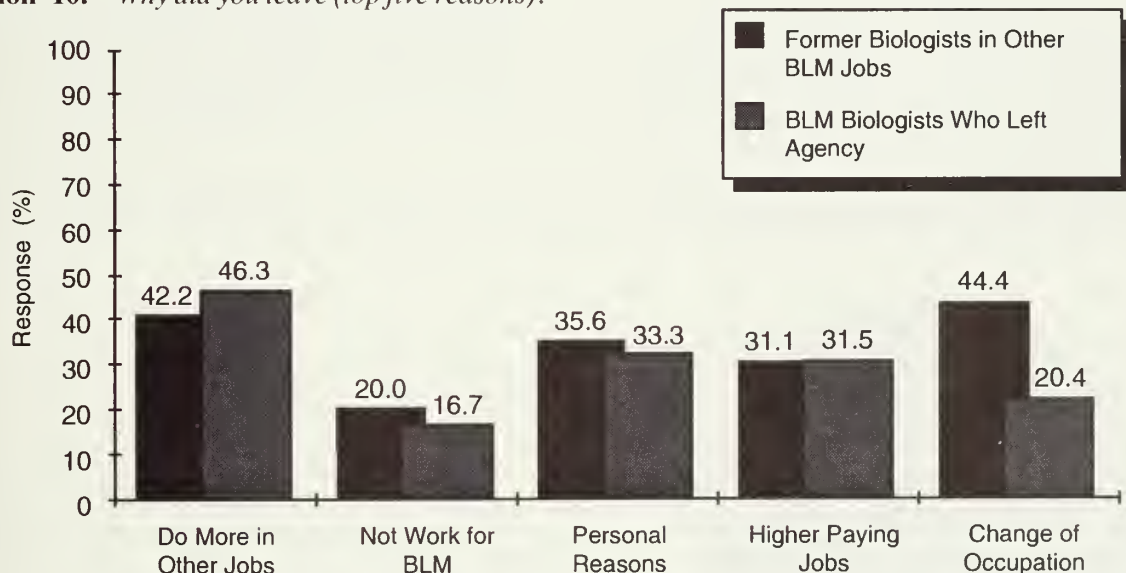
Apparently, both groups felt they could do more for wildlife in other jobs. But the “left agency” group felt they could do more as Biologists with other agencies, whereas the “other jobs with BLM” group felt that could be done better in other jobs within BLM.

Other commonly cited reasons for leaving their last Biologist position (both groups) included dis-

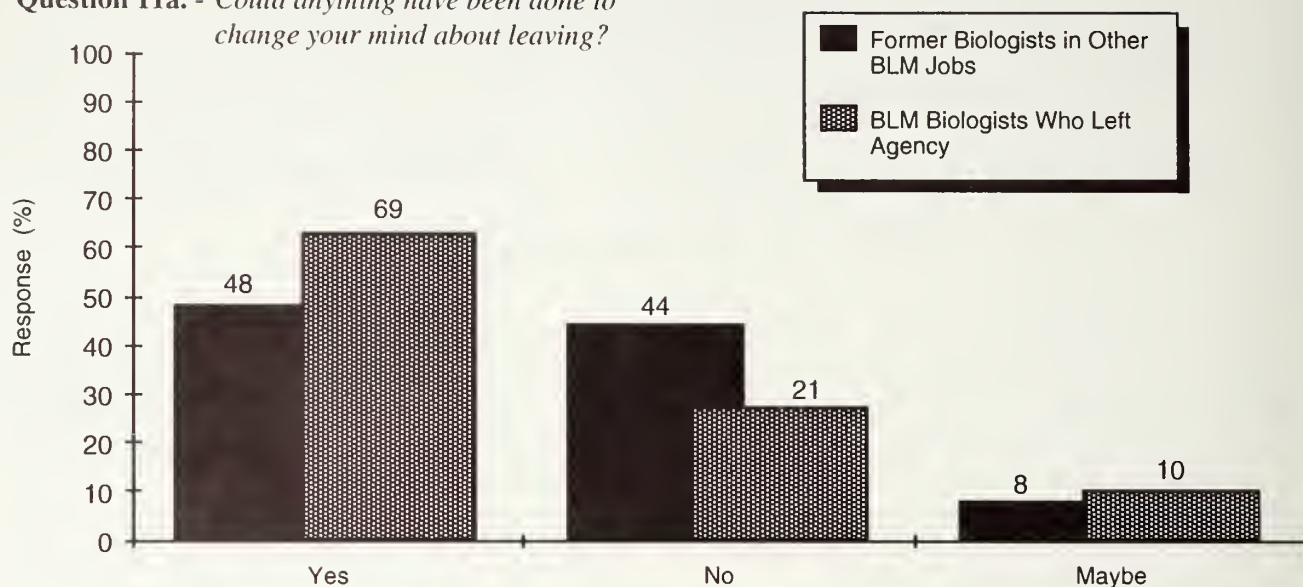
agreement with supervisors, forced moves (reorganizations, funding cuts, or retributions), no promotion or career ladders, lack of management support for the Wildlife Program, dual career consideration (spouse), or a desire to go into management.

The perceived lack of management support for the Wildlife Program was described as (1) failure to act upon or consider wildlife recommendations as equal to other program recommendations, (2) Wildlife Biologist positions not seen as necessary or not utilized effectively, and (3) lack of implementation of wildlife policy, regulations, and laws.

Question 10. - Why did you leave (top five reasons)?



Question 11a. - Could anything have been done to change your mind about leaving?

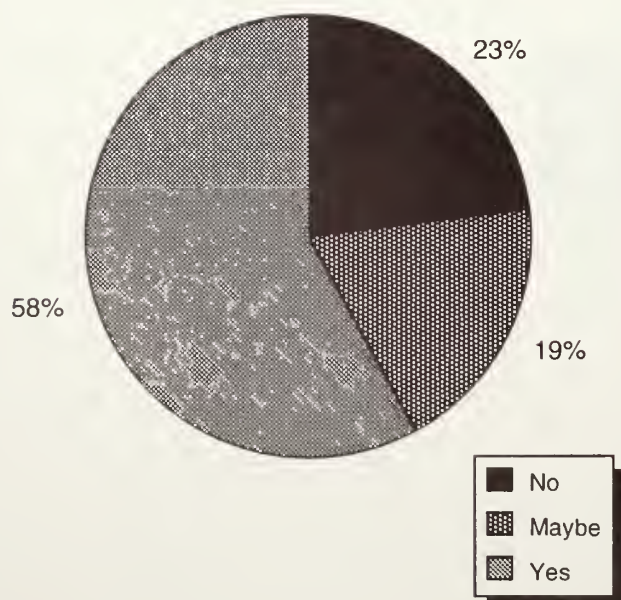


When asked what could have been done to change their mind about leaving the agency or changing professions, or what factors would have influenced them to stay, respondents in both groups indicated the two most important factors were more staffing and/or funding and improved career ladders. Other commonly cited factors included the following: more staffing and/or funding, a change of geographic location, more higher-graded Biologist positions (technical specialists), different supervisors, more recognition of BLM as being on an equal plane with other Federal agencies, increases in salaries, increased training/workshop at-

tendance, a change to the next BLM office level, and forced moves (reorganization or retributions).

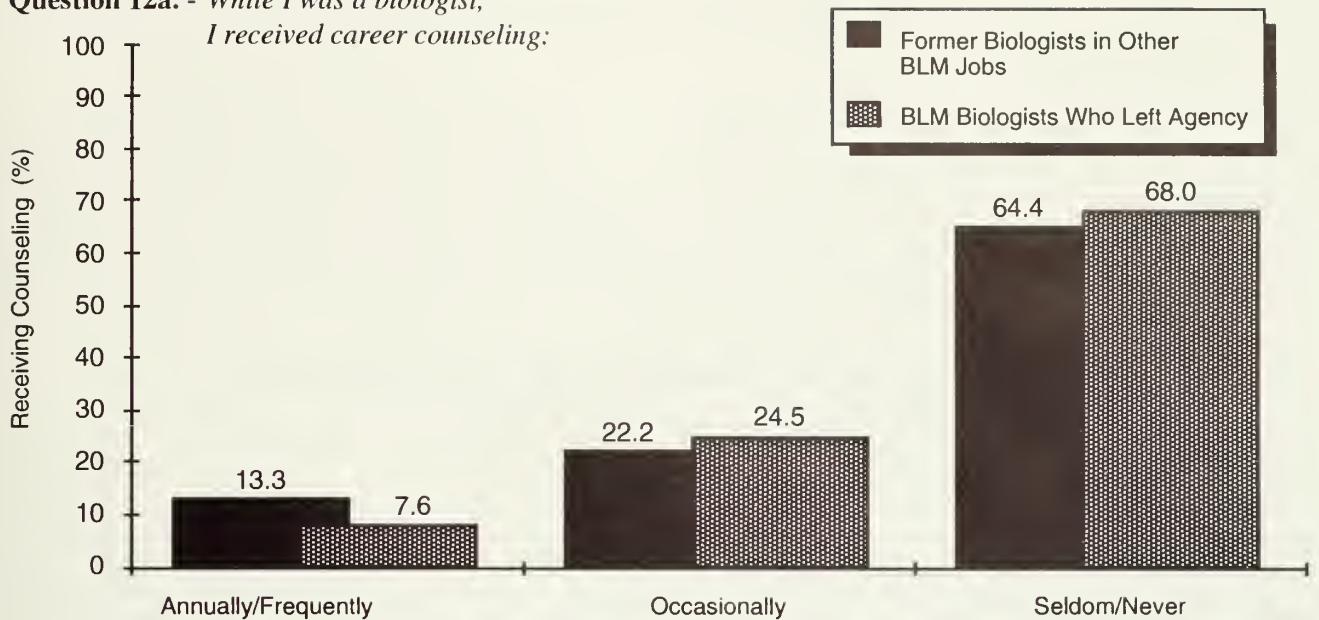
The "other BLM jobs" group felt an improved career ladder was more important than more support for the Wildlife Program, whereas the "left agency" group felt the reverse was true. The "other BLM jobs" group also ranked more staffing and/or funding and more higher graded Biologist positions as more important factors than did the "left agency" group. The "left agency" group felt a geographic relocation with BLM would have been a more important factor.

Question 13. - Would you work for BLM again in the future?



A number of Biologists felt BLM was a good agency and would return (58 percent) if management were to improve, legal and regulatory policies were more consistently implemented, and the principle of multiple use was applied more equitably.

**Question 12a. - While I was a biologist,
I received career counseling:**



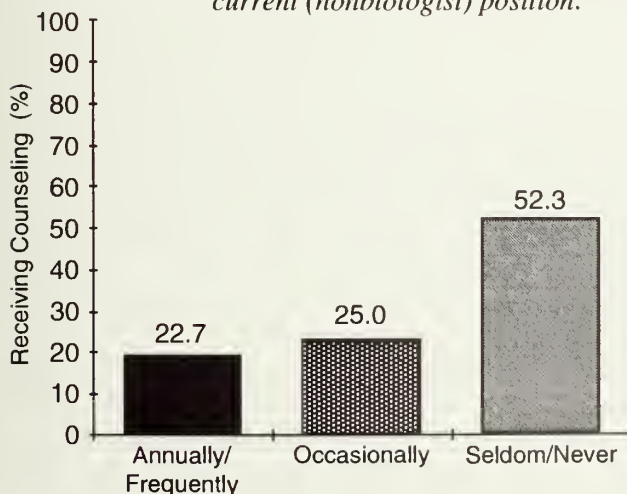
Similar to existing employees (77.6 percent), former Biologists in other jobs (64.4 percent) and Biologists who left the agency (68.0 percent) seldom or

never received career counseling. Counselors for those who received career counseling were similar to those for existing Biologists.

Question 12b. - This counseling was by:

Counselors	Former Biologists In Other Jobs (%)	BLM Biologists Who Left Agency (%)
First Level Supervisor	38	50
Second Level Supervisor	14	14
Other Management Official	19	8
Coworkers (Peers)	16	16
Senior Staff Professionals	13	16
Other	2	6

**Question 13a. - I received career counseling in my
current (nonbiologist) position:**



Slightly more career counseling is occurring with Biologists now in other BLM positions. However, it is unclear whether these persons are seeking more counseling now or if they were more aware and also sought counseling while Biologists.

Recommendations

Recommendations have been grouped into similar categories for ease of reference and discussion. The numbering of recommendations does not express a ranking of priority. All of the following recommendations are felt to be methods of improving employee morale, job satisfaction, productivity, and career en-

richment, which, if accomplished, will improve the Bureau's ability to succeed in its mission. While the CMT was given the task of formulating these recommendations for the agency's Wildlife and Fisheries Biologists, applicability of recommendations to all BLM employees is possible.

Position Classification/Grade Structure

Background

Analysis of written comments shows concerns of the Biologists about the current practice of using Range Conservationist GS-0454 and Forestry GS-0460 position classification standards to classify Wildlife Biologist GS-0486 positions. This may have resulted in unjustifiably low Biologist grade levels. It is perceived that there are grade differences, particularly among RA Biologist positions in the different States. The Division of Personnel (WO-830), is currently writing standardized position descriptions for GS-7/9/11 RA and District Biologist positions. Once these standardized position descriptions are adopted, it is hoped that future position classifications will be consistent.

Recommendations

Position Classification

- Conduct a selected review of Bureau Wildlife Management Biologists GS-0486 (RA and DO)

position classifications based on new standardized PDs.

- Develop standardized position descriptions for SO and WO Wildlife Management Biologists GS-0486, Fisheries Management Biologists GS-0482, and Botanists GS-0430 (GS-5/7, GS-9/11, and GS-12/13).
- Review position descriptions and classifications of other Federal agency Fish and Wildlife Biologists and Botanists. WO-830 would be assigned the lead in the effort.
- The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) should be requested to prepare a position classification standard specifically for Wildlife Management Biologists GS-0486, Fisheries Biologists GS-0482, and Botanists GS-0430.

Job/Career Satisfaction

Background

Improving an employee's self image, and correspondingly, his or her job satisfaction is the simplest, least expensive, and undoubtedly most efficient means an organization can use to increase productivity. The most often cited reason for lack of job satisfaction, low employee morale, and career abandonment has been described throughout this analysis as lack of management support for an employee's profession or field. While changing a supervisor's opinion or attitude toward a specific resource is not likely to occur, methods of improving the employee's self image exist and should be utilized.

Recommendations

Management Support

- Consider increasing the probationary period for new managers.
- Establish a more intensive review for new managers during the probationary period.
- Develop a required managerial skills curriculum that would be completed during the probationary period or shortly thereafter that would focus on:

- Line-staff relationships
- Administration and management of fish, wildlife, and plant resources
- Career counseling and mentoring
- Team building
- Conflict resolution and management
- Meeting facilitation
- Public speaking

Special Projects

- Examine programs like "Project Excel" in Colorado and consider for Bureauwide implementation.

Career Enhancement Assignments

- Identify career enhancement opportunities within the BLM, other Federal and State agencies, public and private organizations, and Congress to include:
 - Short- and long-term committee and task group assignments
 - Interagency and foreign assignments
 - Interagency and foreign exchange programs
 - IPA
 - Job swapping

Membership/Attendance in Professional Societies

- Consolidate existing policy and guidance, and through an Instruction Memorandum, reiterate the Bureau policy that encourages professional

society membership and attendance at professional society meetings.

- Identify management actions that will provide more incentives for specialists and managers to make presentations at professional society meetings and to hold office.

Recognition

- Explore the feasibility of establishing a Bureauwide rewards system that recognizes significant contributions to the management of fish, wildlife, and plant resources on public lands. WO-240 should take the lead on developing and implementing guidelines.

Career Enhancement

- Identify policy and guidance for career couples.
- Develop a policy, if feasible, on job succession, job swapping, and cross-training.
- Identify options to improve and stabilize the cooperative education program.
- Identify a process to conduct exit interviews to identify opportunities for policy and working condition improvements and to reduce the cost of losing highly qualified specialists and managers.

Career Management Programs

Background

The Team concluded it would be extremely productive to examine career management programs in other agencies. One example cited was the Army's use of Career Program Managers to assist in the placement of employees and in career planning activities. A selected review of career management of the more progressive private sector companies could also provide insight into ways to improve the Bureau's career management organization and practices. Another example to consider is the U.S. Forest Service's practice

of utilizing experienced employees as mentors for new employees.

The dismal response to the questions concerning career counseling and career development indicates that some action is needed.

Recommendations

Career Management Programs

- Conduct a review of career management programs of other agencies and a selected review of

more progressive private sector companies to identify specific actions that would enhance BLM career management programs.

Individual Development Plans

- Examine the IDP policy to formulate a decision to either revoke this policy entirely or restress the IDP to require consistent application.

Job Competitiveness

- Prepare a video training program that outlines:
 - Completion of SF-171s
 - Addressing KSAs
 - Evaluation criteria and candidate rating and ranking process
 - Merit promotion system
 - Personnel Management Committee

Human Resources Development

Background

The Human Resources Development Committee (HRDC) was established as a vehicle to assist the Bureau in the most effective and efficient means of improving the agency's personnel management and use of expertise. A common perception held by professionals throughout the Bureau is that the HRDC only represents the best interests of those employees who happen to be in management positions. This seems to be due to the fact that all HRDC members are employees currently holding management positions.

Recommendations

Resource Specialist Subcommittee

- The BMT should form a subcommittee to the HRDC composed entirely of resource specialists currently holding staff or support positions. The chairmen of the subcommittee would be an ad hoc member of the HRDC. The function of this subcommittee would be to promote

professionalism and employee effectiveness, while at the same time demonstrating to the Bureau's resource specialists that they have a stake in human resources development.

Midcareer Specialist Development

- The Bureau should continue to focus fish and wildlife training for midcareer specialists and develop courses to provide Biologists with Fish and Wildlife Program administrative and leadership skills. PTC should be assigned the lead in developing midcareer training.

Educational Opportunities

- Review existing Bureau training policy to determine whether a more flexible interpretation of the job-relatedness clause is appropriate to encourage employees to take advantage of more educational opportunities within and outside the BLM.

The Other Career Ladder

Background

Analysis of the perception of the agency's staff specialists indicate that many people feel there is a very limited career ladder for other than management personnel. An example is the limited number of higher grade GS/GM positions in the Wildlife and Fisheries Program.

Although the STS Program provides an opportunity to improve the grade structure, it has not been fully

utilized or consistently implemented. Moreover, specialists have not been provided with an incentive to become proficient in dual/multiple program responsibilities. Due to budget reductions and corresponding reorganization by States, multiple program responsibilities (dual hatting) is becoming more prevalent.

While this practice reduces total personnel costs, the lack of proficiency in multiple or dual hat program areas by the specialist may result in a decline in sound resource management.

Recommendations

STS Positions

- The WO Division of Wildlife and Fisheries should review the existing STS policy in relation to Fish and Wildlife STS positions as to their effectiveness and functional responsibilities. A determination of future need, feasibility, and guidelines should be considered.

Technical Proficiency

- The WO Division of Wildlife and Fisheries should explore the feasibility of developing competency models for the following positions:

- STS
- Dual-/triple-hat positions with Fish, Wildlife, or Plant Program responsibilities
- Fish and Wildlife Biologists
- Botanists

Specialist Career Ladder

- Review the Bureau's specialist career ladder and:
 - Identify career paths
 - Define available options
 - Develop recommendations on how to improve it

Appendix 1

Direction From Washington Office



IN REPLY REFER TO:

United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

May 12, 1986

Instruction Memorandum No. 86-453
Expires 12/31/86

To: SD's - AZ, NM, CO, WY; D-BIFC

From: Director

Subject: Career Management Team for Biologists

The Bureau is currently undergoing rapid organizational change. To meet the challenges associated with new and more complex tasks and to help improve and manage the career environment for employees, the Bureau has recently established a Human Resources Development (HRD) Committee (IM No. 86-200).

In the spirit of this new commitment and the favorable responses from field offices, the Division of Wildlife will explore career enhancement and job enrichment opportunities for biologists through establishment of an interdisciplinary team. Individuals selected to serve on this team are listed on Attachment 1. The efforts of this team will be well integrated with the Bureau's HRD Committee and existing personnel systems and initiatives.

The objective of this team is to review the current situation to identify the options available and recommend possible courses of action. The team will work in concert with members of the HRD Committee to the extent practical. The team's recommendations will be submitted to the Chief, Division of Wildlife, who will then coordinate with the chairman of the HRD Committee and others, as appropriate, on followup actions.

Travel costs to participate in the initial team meeting should be charged to the participating offices. We will seek additional funds to cover future travel costs of the team. Three team meetings may be required.

The attached action plan outlines specific tasks to be completed. Target dates and responsibilities will be decided at the first meeting. There will be extensive examination of biologists' ideas and concerns. Please contact Dave Almand or Neal Middlebrook (FTS 653-9202; com. 202/653-9202) if you have questions or would like additional information on this initiative.

Guy E. Baier
Assistant Director for Lands and Renewable Resources
Acting

2 Attachments:

- 1 - Career Management Workgroup Members (1 p)
- 2 - Action Plan - Career Management Team (1 p)

Career Management Workgroup Members

Name/Position	Location	Phone	Representing
Brain Mills SO biologist Team Leader	New Mexico SO	FTS 476-6231	Wildlife Biology
Neal Middlebrook Program Leader	WO	FTS 653-9202	Wildlife Biology
Charles Pregler Area Biologist	St. George, UT	801-628-4491	Wildlife Biology
Bill Luscher State Director	New Mexico SO	FTS 476-6030	Advisor
Stewart Freer Associate DM	Canon City, CO	303-275-0631	Manager
Gordon Jennings	DSC	FTS 776-0200	Training/Development

Appendix 2

Bureauwide Questionnaire



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT NEW MEXICO STATE OFFICE

Post Office and Federal Building

P.O. Box 1449

Santa Fe, New Mexico 87504-1449

IN REPLY REFER TO:

6500 (931)

Dear Fellow Employee:

One result of the interaction between the new Chief, Division of Wildlife, WO (240), and the various Field Offices was the establishment of the Career Management Team for Wildlife Biologists. The purpose of this team is to formulate recommendations for career development and job enrichment for Bureau Wildlife and Fisheries Biologists. Obviously, recommendations resulting from this effort will have an impact upon all professionals within the agency.

The enclosed questionnaire was developed to provide the team a basis for these recommendations. Your response is confidential and will ensure that as many opinions and attitudes as possible are considered. Your prompt completion and return of this questionnaire in the enclosed envelope is greatly appreciated.

If you have any questions concerning this effort, contact your respective State Office Wildlife Program Leader or myself, Brian Mills, at FTS 476-6231.

Sincerely,

Brian Mills
Team Leader

Career Management Questionnaire




1. Biographical Sketch

- A. Current Title, Series, and Grade:
- B., Location _____ (Resource Area Office, District Office, State Office, Other):
- C. Tenure at present location:
- D. Length of Service in present position:
- E. Length of BLM Service:
- F. Length of Federal Service:
- G. Length of Professional Experience:

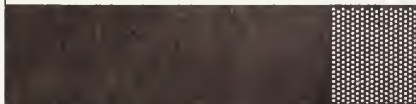
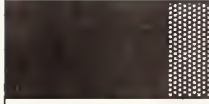

2. I understand the Bureau's job classification system and how it applies to my job:

			Responses	%
	Agree	Strongly		
<div><div></div><div></div></div>	151	29	177	71.1
	Disagree	Strongly		
<div><div></div><div></div></div>	34	9	43	17.3
	No Opinion			
<div><div></div><div></div></div>	29		29	11.6
Total Responses			249	



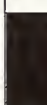
3. My position description accurately describes my duties:

			Responses	%
	Agree	Strongly		
	164	29	193	77.8
	Disagree	Strongly		
	37	9	46	18.5
	No Opinion			
	9		9	3.6
Total Responses			248	




4. *Standardized position description criteria should be developed for the classification of professional positions.*

				Responses	%
		Agree	Strongly		
		112	32	144	58.1
		Disagree	Strongly		
		56	16	72	29.0
		No Opinion			
		32		32	12.9
Total Responses				248	

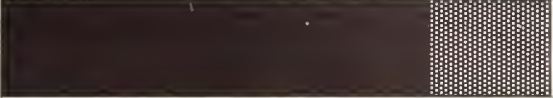


5. *I am satisfied with my present job.*

				Responses	%
		Agree	Strongly		
		130	49	179	74.3
		Disagree	Strongly		
		36	9	45	18.7
		No Opinion			
		17		17	7.1
Total Responses				241	

6. *Bureau management can enhance my job satisfaction.*

			Responses	%
	Agree	Strongly		
	125	92	217	88.2
	Disagree	Strongly		
	7	2	9	3.7
	No Opinion			
	20		20	8.1
Total Responses			246	

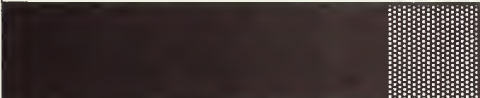
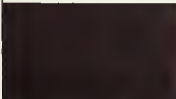

7. *I can improve my job satisfaction.*

			Responses	%
			Agree	Strongly
			155	46
			201	81.0
			Disagree	Strongly
			22	1
			23	9.3
			No Opinion	
			24	24
			24	9.7
Total Responses			248	

8. *What can the Bureau do to enhance job satisfaction in your current position? (Check the three most important.)*

Rank		Responses
1	Support attendance at professional meetings	126
2	Training to stay proficient	119
3	Support for special projects	110
4	Continuing education	81
5	Opportunities for details/committee assignments	74
6	Job assignment swaps/shadowing	68
7	Other	63
8	Time to prepare professional papers	45
9	Pay for professional certification	11

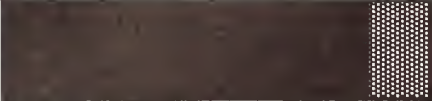

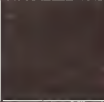
9a. *I have well defined career goals.*

			Responses	%
			Agree	Strongly
			129	32
			161	64.9
			Disagree	Strongly
			57	2
			59	23.8
			No Opinion	
			28	28
			28	11.3
Total Responses			248	

9b. *These career goals include (check one):*

%		Responses
4.8	At this time I have no career goals	12
31.3	My career goal is to remain in place/location	78
20.1	I wish to enter line management	50
29.3	I desire to attain a higher graded staff position	73
6.4	My plan is to change occupation	16
8.0	I intend to leave the agency	20


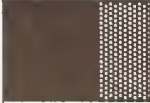

10. *I am aware of a career path necessary to achieve my goal.*

				Responses	%
		Agree	Strongly		
		134	25	159	64.6
		Disagree	Strongly		
		37	11	48	19.5
		No Opinion			
		39		39	15.9
Total Responses				246	

11. *This schedule for goal accomplishment includes (check the most important):*

%		Responses
44.6	Geographic move	104
20.6	Continuing education	48
25.8	Cross training/dual hatting	60
9.0	Complete change of profession	21

12. *I feel that there is a future for me within my profession in the Bureau.*

			Responses	%
	Agree	Strongly		
	118	41	159	64.9
	Disagree	Strongly		
	36	22	58	23.7
	No Opinion			
	28		28	11.4
Total Responses			245	

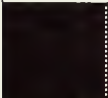

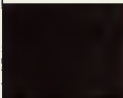
13a. I have received career counseling:

%		Responses
2.4	Annually	6
0.8	Frequently	2
19.2	Occasionally	48
47.6	Seldom	119
30.0	Never	75

13b. This counseling was by (check as many boxes as applicable):

%		Responses
38.6	First level supervisor	118
13.7	Second level supervisor	42
11.4	Other management officials	35
17.0	Coworkers (peers)	52
8.2	Senior staff professionals	25
11.1	Other	34

14. I have an effective Individual Development Plan (IDP) that enhances my career goals.

				Responses	%	
		Agree	Strongly			
			38	3	41	16.9
		Disagree	Strongly			
			86	68	154	63.6
		No Opinion				
			47		47	19.4
Total Responses				242		

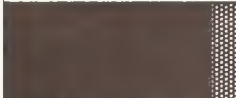
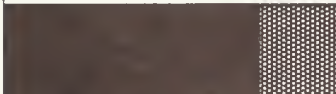

15. How many geographic moves have you made to further your career goals?

%		Responses
13.5	None	34
24.7	One	62
18.3	Two	46
22.7	Three	57
20.7	Four or more	52

16. In your current position, how many other jobs have you applied for recently within the past two years?

Average overall	2.2
Average of those looking	4.8

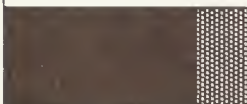
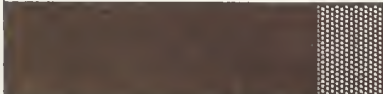

17. I fully understand the Bureau's merit promotion and National and Statewide Personnel Management Committee (PMC) processes for promotions and lateral reassignments.

			Responses	%
	Agree	Strongly		
	77	11	88	35.8
	Disagree	Strongly		
	94	32	126	51.2
	No Opinion			
	32		32	13.0
Total Responses			246	

18. What could improve your competitiveness for Bureau positions (check the three most important):

Rank	Responses
1 Accept details or committee assignments for additional experience	131
2 Knowledge of vacant positions	89
3 Training in addressing KSAs	87
4 Familiarity with the applicant ranking process	80
5 Continuing education (Coll. or Univ.)	73
6 Training in the interview process	72
7 Training in preparation of SF	17
9 Professional Society membership	9

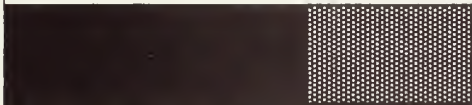

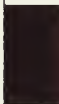
19. I am working at my full potential in my present position.

			Responses	%
	Agree	Strongly		
	71	22	93	37.2
	Disagree	Strongly		
	116	25	141	56.4
	No Opinion			
	16		16	6.4
Total Responses			250	

20. *I feel that I am not working at my full potential due to (check the three most important):*

Rank		Responses
1	Lack of management support	136
2	Lack of staffing and funding	115
3	Job burnout	56
4	Inadequate recognition	52
5	Not maintaining professional proficiency	37
6	I desire a change in profession	16

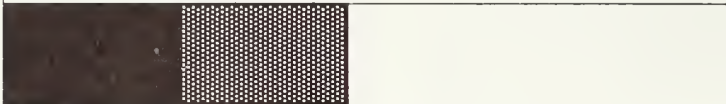


21a. *I feel that communication skills are the most important aspect of my job.*

				Responses	%
		Agree	Strongly		
		113	64	177	72.2
		Disagree	Strongly		
		44	2	46	18.8
		No Opinion			
		22		22	9.0
Total Responses				245	

21b. *Rank these communication skills based upon their importance to your job.*

Rank	
1	Conflict resolution
2	Writing skills
3	Feedback from management
4	Public speaking/briefings/presentations
5	Team building

22. One approach used by some agencies to provide parallel career ladders is to establish Senior Technical Specialist (STS) positions (Senior Professionals) either in zones, Statewide, or on a National basis. I feel that the Bureau should establish STS positions.

			Responses	%
			Agree	Strongly
			67	64
			131	53.9
			Disagree	Strongly
			28	17
			45	18.5
			No Opinion	
			67	
			67	27.6
Total Responses			243	

23. How do you feel that a STS position should be structured?

Appendix 3

Questionnaire to Former BLM Biologists in Other Positions Within BLM

Questionnaire

Former BLM Biologists in Other Positions with BLM

45 of 70 questionnaires returned (64%)

Results as of 4/8/87

1. Are you currently working as a biologist?

%		Responses
8.9	Yes	4
91.1	No	41

2. The last position I held with BLM as a biologist was at:

%		Responses
35.6	Resource Area Office	16
42.2	District Office	19
11.1	State Office	5
11.1	Other (describe)	5

The office was located in _____ (name the State, District, and/or RA)

Alaska	2	Idaho	4	N. Dakota	1	W.O.	3
Arizona	2	Montana	6	Oregon	4	California	3
Nevada	3	Utah	5	Colorado	2	New Mexico	3
Wyoming	6						

3. I have held the following positions with BLM (list current position first)
 _____ (Job title, Series, Grade, Office level).

	Average	Range
4. Tenure at present location (years)	4.5	.2-18
5. Length of service at present location (years)	4.8	.2-12
6. Length of BLM service (years)	12.6	5-25
7. Length of Federal service (years)	14.3	6-28
8. Length of Professional experience (years)	12.9	5-25
9. How many years since you left your last wildlife position?	5.2	.5-14

10. Why did you leave your last biologist position (rank five, No. 1 being the major reason)

%		Responses
44.4	I desired a change of occupation	20
17.8	Continue my education	8
35.6	Personal reasons	16
11.1	Dual career considerations (spouse)	5
31.1	Higher paying job	14
6.7	Disagreement with supervisor	3
42.2	I could do more for wildlife/fisheries/botany in other jobs	19
0.0	Retirement	0
20.0	I did not want to continue to work for BLM as a biologist (explain)	9
62.2	Other	28

NOTE: Many individuals listed 3 or 4 reasons each and/or coded the same answer more than once.

11a. Was there anything that could have been done to change your mind about leaving the biologist position?

%		Responses
48	Yes	21
44	No	20
8	Maybe	4

11b. If yes, rank five factors that would have most influenced you to stay (No. 1 being most influential):

%		Responses
36	More recognition of performance by management	9
76	More staffing and/or funding	19
24	Change of position in BLM (next office level)	6
20	Change of location in BLM (geographic)	5
24	Increase in salary	6
60	More support for wildlife/fisheries/botany program(s) by management	15
12	Different supervisor (AM, DM, etc.)	3
20	More support for research within BLM	5
12	Increased opportunities for continuing education	3
96	Improved career ladder	24
52	More higher grade biologists positions (technical specialists)	13
24	Increased training/workshop attendance	6
4	Better PIPR development and utilization	1
12	Position description changes to more accurately match job assignments	3
36	Increased recognition of BLM as being on an equal plane with other Federal agencies	9
28	Reclassify position to higher grade level	7
16	Other (describe)	4
—	No response to question	20

NOTE: Many individuals listed 3 or 4 factors each and/or coded the same answer more than once.

12a. *While I was a biologist with BLM I received career counseling:*

%		Responses
11.1	Annually	5
2.2	Frequently	1
22.2	Occasionally	10
40.0	Seldom	18
24.4	Never	11

12b. *This counseling was by (check as many boxes as applicable):*

%		Responses
38	First level supervisor	24
14	Second level supervisor	9
19	Other management officials	12
16	Coworkers (peers)	10
13	Senior staff professionals	8
2	Other by contractors	1
—	Not applicable (Answered 12a with “Never”)	10

13a. *I received career counseling in my current position:*

%		Responses
15.9	Annually	7
6.8	Frequently	3
25.0	Occasionally	11
34.1	Seldom	15
18.2	Never	8

13b. *This counseling was by (check as many boxes as applicable):*

%		Responses
45	First level supervisor	31
23	Second level supervisor	16
19	Other management officials	13
9	Co-workers (peers)	6
3	Senior staff professionals	2
1	Other	1
—	Not applicable (answered 13a with “Never”)	6

14. *How do you feel about the goals, philosophies, and organization of the BLM? Any ideas on how these or other areas might be improved (wildlife, fisheries, botany, or other resources)?*

OPTIONAL

Name _____
 Address _____
 City/State/Zip Code _____
 Phone No. (Commercial) _____

Appendix 4

Questionnaire to Former BLM Biologists No Longer With Agency

Questionnaire



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
ARIZONA STRIP DISTRICT OFFICE

390 North 3050 East
St George, Utah 84770



IN REPLY REFER TO

August 19, 1986

Memorandum

To: Former BLM Biologists
From: Career Management Team
Subject: Former BLM Biologist Questionnaire

We need your help. As part of a Bureau-wide effort to improve the career opportunities for all employees, a survey of former BLM Biologists is being conducted. Information from this survey and recommendations for improvements will be compiled by the team and submitted to the Chief, Division of Wildlife, and the Human Resources Development Committee for followup actions. Feel free to leave blank any question you do not wish to answer.

Please take 10 minutes and fill out the attached questionnaire. Your help in identifying and hopefully eliminating problem areas is appreciated. Your name and address is optional, but if you want to add detailed information and/or recommendations or have questions, feel free to contact Charles Pregler, Arizona Strip District, 196 E. Tabernacle, St. George, UT 84770; (801) 628-4491.

Please place the completed questionnaire in the blue envelope, seal and return inside the small brown envelope.

Thank you!

Charles Pregler

Attachment

Former BLM Biologists No Longer With Agency

54 of 95 questionnaires returned (57%)

Results as of 3/9/87

1a. Are you currently working as a biologist?

%		Responses
81.5	Yes	44
18.5	No	10

1b. My current job title is _____ with _____ (agency, company, etc.).

2a. The last position I held with BLM was at:

%		Responses
44.4	Resource Area Office	24
33.3	District Office	18
14.8	State Office	8
7.4	Other (describe)	4

The office was located in _____ (name the State, District, and/or RA).

Alaska	7	Montana	7	Utah	8	Arizona	2
Nevada	7	Wyoming	9	California	5	New Mexico	1
ESO	1	Colorado	1	N. Dakota	0		
Idaho	2	Oregon	3				

Total = 53

3. I held the following positions with BLM (list last first) _____ (Job title, Series, Grade, Office level):

	Average	Range
4. Tenure at present location (years)	4.9	.3-27
5. Length of service at present location (years)	4.8	.2-27
6. Length of BLM service (years)	7.0	1.5-27
7. Length of Federal service (years)	12.2	3-27
8. Length of Professional experience (years)	13.7	3-36
9. How many years since you left your last wildlife position?	3.9	0-10

10. Why did you leave BLM (rank five, No. 1 being major reason)

%		Responses
20.4	I desired a change of occupation	11
11.1	Continue my education	6
33.3	Personal reasons	18
13.0	Dual career considerations (spouse)	7
31.5	Higher paying job	17
20.4	Disagreement with supervisor	11
46.3	I could do more for wildlife/fisheries/botany in other jobs	25
9.3	Retirement	5
16.7	I did not want to continue to work for BLM (explain)	9
59.3	Other	32
11.1	No promotion or career ladder	6

11a. Was there anything that could have been done to change your mind about leaving?

%	Responses
69	Yes 36
21	No 16
10	Maybe

11b. If yes, rank five factors that would have most influenced you to stay (No. 1 being most influential):

%		Responses
30	More recognition of performance by management	11
30	More staffing and/or funding	11
14	Change of position in BLM (next office level)	5
35	Change of location in BLM (geographic)	13
30	Increase in salary	11
73	More support for wildlife/fisheries/botany program(s) by management)	27
32	Different supervisor (AM, DM, etc.)	12
14	More support for research within BLM	5
8	Increased opportunities for continuing education	3
43	Improved career ladder	16
30	More higher grade biologists positions (technical specialists)	11
16	Increased training/workshop attendance	6
5	Better PIPR development and utilization	2
3	Position description changes to more accurately match job assignments	1
30	Increased recognition of BLM as being on an equal plane with other Federal agencies	11
8	Reclassify position to higher grade level	3
16	Other (describe)	6
—	Not applicable (answered "No" to 11a)	8
—	No response	6

12a. *While I was with BLM I received career counseling:*

%		Responses
1.9	Annually	1
5.7	Frequently	3
24.5	Occasionally	13
34.0	Seldom	18
34.0	Never	18

12b. *This counseling was by (check as many boxes as applicable):*

%		Responses
50	First level supervisor	25
14	Second level supervisor	7
8	Other management officials	4
16	Coworkers (peers)	8
16	Senior staff professionals	8
6	Other	3
—	No response	3
—	Not applicable (answered 12a with “Never”)	

13. *Would you work for BLM again in the future?*

%		Responses
58	Yes	42
23	No	12
19	Maybe	

14. *How do you feel about the goals, philosophies and organizations of the BLM? Any ideas on how these or other areas might be improved (wildlife or other resources)?*

OPTIONAL

Name _____
Address _____
City/State/Zip Code _____
Phone No. (Commercial) _____

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

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13. ABSTRACT (Maximum 200 words) The findings of the Career Management Team are compiled in one of a series of strategic plans prepared by BLM for managing the fish and wildlife resources found on public lands. Management of these fish and wildlife resources is achieved by wildlife personnel; thus, effective land management requires effective personnel management. BLM must not only plan and initiate activities to manage fish and wildlife resources, but it must also assist employees in managing their careers and realizing their potentials. By surveying a sample of all wildlife program personnel in the Bureau, many concerns about personnel management in the Bureau surfaced. This plan addresses the concerns and makes recommendations.

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